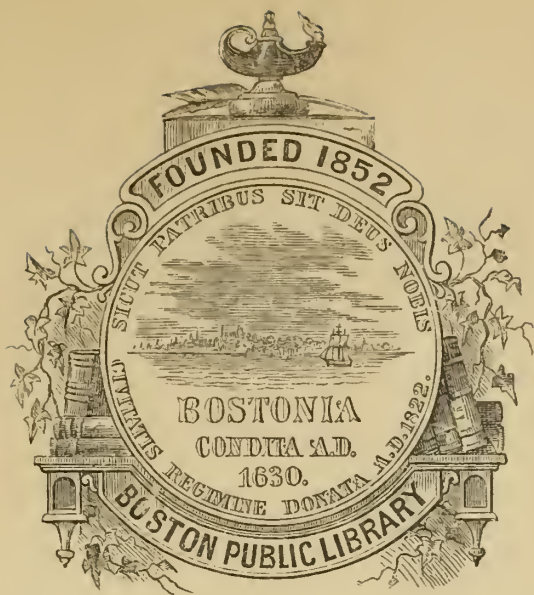


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MEMORANDA.

EMIGRATION

AND

SUPERABUNDANT POPULATION

CONSIDERED,

IN

A LETTER TO LORD ASHLEY.

BY

AMICUS POPULI.

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EMIGRATION

AND

SUPERABUNDANT POPULATION,

ETC. ETC.

TO THE

RIGHT HON. LORD ASHLEY.

MY LORD,

Superabundant population and over-production are expressions in almost daily use by political economists; but such terms are but imperfectly understood, owing to a want of reflection regarding their true import.

The real wealth of a nation consists in its having a large, intelligent, and industrious population, occupying a fruitful soil, rich in ores and minerals; a climate suitable for the development of labour in all its varied forms; machinery of the most perfect kind; an abundant supply, both of raw materials and manufactured articles; and facilities of communication by land and water, with all parts of the world.

These constitute the wealth of nations, and are, for the most part, the gifts of Providence; and unless the demand for food and clothing—the prin-

cial necessities of life—exceed the supply, the population cannot be too numerous.

Any increase of population is an increase of wealth, for every individual, however humble, creates wants; and provided the labour of such population is properly developed, the result adds to the national stock of commodities, irrespective of any money value which may be assigned to them.

The wealth above described is possessed by England to an extent greatly beyond that of other nations, and did not legislation cripple the resources of the country and check the operations of labour, it would be impossible to define the extent to which such productions might be carried.

The labourers are willing to exchange their labour for a small portion of the superflux of the nation's wealth; but, from causes over which they have no control, they are prevented effecting this desirable exchange: they consequently become dissatisfied with laws which recognize such an unnatural state of things.

Should they petition the Crown on this anomalous state of things, we can imagine their commencing with the astounding fact, “that in the midst of
“ plenty they are starving; that they are without
“ employment, and consequently without the means
“ of support; that the wealth which surrounds them
“ is the produce of their labour; that they are
“ willing yet further to add to the national wealth,
“ provided the opportunity be afforded them; that

“ they are at a loss to understand why they should be
 “ denied a portion of the necessaries of life, which is
 “ in such abundance, neither can they comprehend
 “ the doctrine, that *over-production causes them to*
 “ *want bread*; they think that there must be some-
 “ thing wrong; and they therefore pray that Her
 “ Majesty will be graciously pleased to direct that
 “ a searching investigation may be instituted with-
 “ out delay, for the purpose of ascertaining the true
 “ cause or causes of their present condition, viz. a
 “ starving and distressed population in the midst of
 “ plenty.”

✕ The prayer of such petitioners would be justly
 entitled to consideration; for it is high time that
 the nation should come to some clear and distinct
 understanding on the subject of superabundant po-
 pulation and over-production; the time is passed
 for assuming any thing or taking for granted all
 that has been handed down to us by the *wisdom*
of our ancestors—we must be more of a matter-of-
 fact people.

The wealth or produce of labour may be said to
 be shared by three classes of the community; the
 share of the labourer we call wages, that of the
 employer profits, and that of the landlord rent.
 Every labourer produces more than he consumes;
 the excess is the profit of the employer; if the
 employer does not consume all that he receives from
 his labourers, the stock of profit accumulates; this
 constitutes the first stage of over-production; and

as the stock continues to accumulate, so in proportion is its exchangeable value depreciated.

The evil of over-production would be alleviated, if not altogether removed, were the labouring classes to receive in exchange for their labour an equitable proportion of the productions of their labour; this would prevent the stock of commodities from increasing, and would necessarily increase the cost of production without prejudice to the employer.

We doubt not but the advocates of the theory of superabundant population are actuated by charitable motives when they seek to get rid of the labourers by means of emigration: doubtless they believe they are acting a kind part in affording them facilities for supporting themselves in some distant land. This, however, does not appear to be the chief consideration of these *philanthropists*; they sincerely regret that the population should be so large as to make it necessary that a portion should be removed, but get rid of them they must *coute qui coute*.

An increasing population is, with them, a subject of condolence; they would rather the population of the country had not increased; and, except from religious motives, they would not have grieved if the surplus population had been swept away.

What says Mr. Malthus, their great organ, on this subject?

“ A man born into a world already possessed, if
“ he cannot get assistance from his parents, and if

“ society does not want his labour, *has no claim of*
 “ *right to the smallest portion of food, and, in fact,*
 “ *has no business to be where he is.* At Nature’s
 “ mighty feast there is no vacant seat for him ; she
 “ tells him to be gone, and will quickly execute
 “ her own order, if he do not work on the compas-
 “ sion of some of her guests. If the guests get up
 “ and make room for him, other intruders imme-
 “ diately appear, demanding the same favour.”

The philosopher continues : “ I propose a regu-
 “ lation to be made, that no child born from any
 “ marriage taking place after the expiration of a
 “ year from the date of the law, and no illegitimate
 “ child born two years after the same date, should
 “ ever be entitled to parish assistance : this would
 “ operate as a fair, distinct, and precise notice.”

“ After this public notice had been given, the
 “ poor man marrying is to be dealt with as one
 “ guilty of an immoral act. To the punishment of
 “ nature he should be left the punishment of
 “ severe want ; all parish assistance should be most
 “ rigidly denied to him, and if the hand of private
 “ charity be stretched forth in his relief, the inte-
 “ rest of humanity imperiously requires that it
 “ should be administered very sparingly. He
 “ should be taught to know, that the laws of
 “ Nature, *which are the laws of God,* HAD DOOMED
 “ HIM AND HIS FAMILY TO STARVE FOR DISOBEY-
 “ ING THEIR REPEATED ADMONITIONS.”

The admirers of this doctrine, which, to the

disgrace of mankind are numerous, lay down the principle, that if a labouring man cannot find employment to afford him the wages of labour, he is *superabundant*, and ought forthwith to be put out of the way or compelled to emigrate.

But it must be borne in mind that it is only to the honest, the industrious, and able-bodied of the agricultural classes, that speculators in foreign settlements hold out the inducements of emigration; these surely are the persons whom of all others a State should be anxious to retain at home. If an absolute necessity exists to thin the population of a country, it ought to be the idle, dissolute, drunken, and dishonest, that the Government, if acting wisely, would wish to get rid of.

“ Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey,
 “ Where wealth accumulates and men decay;
 “ Princes and lords may flourish and may fade,
 “ A breath can make them as a breath hath made;
 “ But a bold peasantry, their country’s pride,
 “ When once destroyed can never be supplied.”

In considering the subject of superabundant population and over-production, we must bear in mind the following facts,—that in the absence of over-production the population would not be considered in excess, and it is so considered, simply because the supply of the products of labour exceeds the demand.

There are two remedies for this state of things :

the one suggested is, that labourers should *be compelled to emigrate*, no matter where, so long as they cease to be burdensome on the public, by seeking to add by their labour to the productions already in excess; this would relieve the labour-market of the superabundant population: the other proposal is to deal with commodities in excess rather than with labourers in excess.

The labourer is the machine that produces the commodities; and it becomes a question, whether the machine or the productions should be destroyed; and on this point there can be no doubt, for productions were made to be consumed or destroyed; the owners of the property are constantly seeking customers to consume it; they would rejoice, if well insured, that a fire should destroy it,—they would not grieve for the loss of the commodities of others which might assist to enhance the value of their own.

We can readily imagine every person possessing property, commodities, in arms against the proposition set forth; but let it be borne in mind that these very persons, disciples of Malthus, are seeking to destroy the labouring classes, because by their labour they create for others what they would like to have destroyed, that their commodities might be enhanced in value.

The employers of labourers and shop-keepers have an interest antagonistic to that of the labouring classes; they care not but for themselves; their

chief desire is to obtain on the lowest possible terms every production in which they deal, and charge the consumer for them the highest possible price, reserving the difference for themselves.

Much has been said and written respecting the resources of the United States of America, yet of what do they consist, and what are the capabilities of that country? Its labouring classes are mostly fully employed on a system of reciprocity; they are better fed and clothed than the labourers of Europe; their labour is consequently more costly.

As a factory in America does not produce more than a similar factory in Europe, it is very evident that the hands employed in the American factory obtain, as their share, a larger portion of the produce of the mill than is the case in Europe; it is a well-known fact that the women employed in the American mills are not only decently but handsomely attired.

This system of increased expenditure amongst the labouring classes tends to check the evils complained of with us, viz., over-production; for as fast as the goods are produced, they are consumed or they are exchanged for other goods more anxiously desired, still leaving the same profit to the employer. If, however, we look to the resources of the United States, we find that country is producing nearly as much as it is capable of producing with its actual population.

Every labourer landing in America finds employ-

ment, consequently it would be difficult or impossible for the Americans to keep up a standing army of 300,000 men without diminishing productions of some sort ; neither could America double its supply of cotton, corn, or other products, without abstracting the labourers from other occupations.

Provided it could be shown that the means of support were insufficient to maintain the population of this country, there would be reasonable grounds for assuming it to be superabundant ; but to contend that the population is superabundant because there happens to be an abundance of unconsumed produce is an absurdity, and is substituting the effect for the cause.

If we admit that the population of this country is redundant, and take measures for reducing it one-half, including a just proportion of the three classes before referred to, without at the same time lessening the quantity of the unconsumed produce, no relief would be afforded, the population would still be superabundant, because there would be surplus products, and consequently no employment for labourers ; the inconvenience complained of would in fact be greatly increased, since the store of commodities, houses, &c., would bear a larger proportion to the population than it did before.

If, however, we consider the second proposition, and seriously apply ourselves to get rid of this over-production, we find a beneficial remedy through the means of consumption or destruction, and thus re-

move the necessity of emigration without injuring any pre-existing interest; the consumption or destruction of produce that does harm, is when the articles destroyed would otherwise have been exchanged for labour, which quantity of labour is not now required to be performed.

We will suppose a steam-engine to be constructed for the sole purpose of pumping water and raising coals for its own use, the engineer disposing only of so much of the coal in exchange for oil and tallow as may be absolutely required for keeping the engine in good working condition, and of a further quantity of coal in exchange for such products as he may require for the purpose of polishing and ornamenting the engine, but which latter, however, are not essential to the efficiency of its operations.

The engine here described is of the most perfect kind, raising more coal and pumping more water than is required, and in fact doing that which in ordinary cases would be deemed a great advantage, viz. producing more coal than is consumed. A mountain of coal, of over-production or profits, is in course of formation and the works are flooded with water.

The engineer, a celebrated "political currency economist," appears to consider that the engine with its powerful machinery is too perfect and too effective in its operations, and he is ready to aid his indefatigable stoker, "a Scotch economist," in saving the fuel by feeding the fire with an inferior

article, by which means they reckon they will remedy the complaint of over-production.

The engine has no other work to perform than what conduces to its own benefit, yet the engineer is desirous of showing what an efficient engine he has, and how much work it can do at a small cost ; but to supply the boiler with more coals, or the engine with more oil or tallow, would manifestly make it more costly, and as economy is his object he cannot entertain any such proposition.

He and his colleague hit upon the expedient of working the engine short time, but still the consumption is not equal to the production—the heap of coal still increases ; they then imagine the over-production may be diminished by working the engine still more economically, and to accomplish this they import a cheaper and much inferior coal, little better than cinders, from engines worked in America, Russia, and Egypt. In this way there is a saving in the quantity of oil and tallow, but still the produce continues to increase.

A number of knowing engineers have been consulted as to the best mode of preventing any further accumulation of coals, but like their chief they all appear to be in favour of making the engine still less effective : this is done by enlarging the tube of the safety-valve, so that the steam may escape with greater freedom, and never generate to a greater pressure than one atmosphere. This answers for a time ; but as the engine is worked on the most

economical scale, yet its power of production, even at this low pressure, far surpasses what was anticipated ; the engineer has at last discovered that the engine has not received its due proportion of what is produced by its own unassisted efforts ; he therefore supplies it with a more costly oil and tallow and a larger quantity of the best fuel, and by an equitable distribution of the products the efficiency of the engine is increased, and this he continues to do from time to time, exchanging the surplus for materials connected with the engine, which he provides with every requisite that can possibly be devised, so that it is always kept in good working condition.

Under the similitude of a steam-engine we have endeavoured to show the condition of the productive powers of this country, and the manner in which some of our political economists would act towards this productive power. We could further show the utter uselessness of endeavouring to steer the state vessel to a safe port by lessening the number of hands employed in navigating her. An addition to the population of a number of consumers or a more liberal distribution of those products, which are now deemed to be in excess, to the producer of them, would immediately dispel the illusion, under which we are labouring, of superabundant population and over-production, and afford full occupation to the unemployed. The time, however, is not far distant when we hope to see our

rulers made sensible of this fact, "that population is the very sinews of wealth," and on no other basis than the well-being of that population can the happiness and prosperity of a nation be secured.

There are, however, those who, admitting the unsoundness of our present system, are not prepared to receive opinions, however clear they may be made to appear, which are startling and at variance with those taught in the schools in which they have been educated, and which they conceive may not tend to their benefit.

To conclude. I have not submitted the opinions before stated without being prepared to vindicate them by evidence the most conclusive; but it will be sufficient time for me further to declare myself when the public and those in authority are disposed to entertain the question.

I am,

Your Lordship's most obedient Servant,

AMICUS POPULI.



FEB 27 1930

